



Connecting people to the land since 1895

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Testimony of Clare Cain, Trails Stewardship Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Support/ Oppose
RAISED SENATE BILL 1062: AN ACT PROVIDING CONTINUED FUNDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION'S RECREATION TRAILS PROGRAM.	Strongly Support

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For 120 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on sustainable forestry, state parks and forests, trail recreation, natural resource protection, and land conservation issues.

I want to thank the Co-Chairs for raising Senate Bill 1062 which would maintain support and funding for DEEP's Recreation Trails Program (RTP). With some small enhancements in the language of this bill, specifically those proposed by DEEP, the RTP can continue to grow and flourish as the primary source of funding for the trails community in Connecticut.

As you may be aware, CFPA is responsible for over 825 miles of hiking trails across the state. Maintenance of these trails is no small feat. It takes an army of volunteers to do the necessary work. Thankfully we have been a recipient of RTP funding for the past 18 years. The RTP funding we receive has annually outfitted our volunteers corps with tools and safety equipment they need to perform routine maintenance activities, like clearing trails after major storms, installing necessary signage, and repairing footbridges. With this funding we have been able to educate thousands of visitors with new trailhead kiosks and provide trail updates online. Our volunteers work on trails in many of the State's Parks and Forests including Peoples State Forest, Pachaug State Forest, Bigelow Hollow State Park, Kettletown State Park, and West Rock Ridge State Park. Without these volunteers and this funding, many trails would be abandoned, overgrown, and in disrepair.

It has been widely documented both at the state and federal levels, that trails enhance quality of life. They generate tourism dollars, they improve overall health and promote outdoor activity. They are fundamentally a good thing for communities, for families, for all of us. But there are costs associated with developing and maintaining these recreational resources. And RTP is the key.

The RTP program is a catalyst for many groups like CFPA. We are a family of trail advocates who believe that, by getting people outside, we can foster an appreciation for the natural world. We can encourage an environmental ethic and instill a sense of discovery, wonder and healthy living that will be shared with our children.

In conjunction with a companion bond request, the Governor's Bill 947, (*An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes*), we believe the RTP program can evolve to have even greater impacts for the people of the state.

Our organization strongly urges the Committee to support this program.



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Thank you again for raising this important bill and for the opportunity to testify! I would be glad to respond to any questions you may have.